DEMOCRATIC
GERMAN REPORT

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THREAT FOR WEST

Soviet - GDR Declaration Flays W. German Plan

Ruling circles in West Germany would like to grab territory from some Western European countries, stated an official communique issued on June 20th by the Governments of the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic.

The communique was issued at the conclusion of a twelve-day visit to the Soviet Union by a heavy-weight delegation from Democratic Germany, headed by Prime Minister Otto Grotewohl and Walter Ulbricht, First Secretary of the Socialist Unity Party.

Here are some of the main points from the communique:

1. The West German Threat

"Ruling circles in Bonn are turning West Germany into an aggressive military state which is beginning to step in Hitler's footsteps. The militarist and revenge-seeking forces make no secret of the fact that their plans are not only directed against the German Democratic Republic and the countries of Eastern Europe, but that they would like to gobble up parts of the territory of their own NATO allies in West Europe. German militarism armed with nuclear weapons is a serious threat to all the nations of Europe, and a deadly danger to the people of West Germany."

2. Adenauer

"Certain circles of the western powers, and in particular the German Federal Republic, are trying to prevent the solution of current problems. These circles, represented in particular by Chancellor Adenauer, are attempting to liven up the cold war. Adenauer is attempting to sharpen the political situation in Germany, and at the same time to sow dissension amongst the states of Europe . . . The Government of the German Federal Republic is today the main opponent of a lessening of international tension, and obstinately opposes an agreement being reached between the great powers. This Government rejects all proposals aimed at peace in Europe and a rapprochement of the two German states.

3. The Geneva Conference

". . . After many years of cold war the western powers have become ready to discuss the most urgent international questions at the Foreign Ministers' Conference in Geneva. The Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic welcome the fact that the western powers have abandoned their unrealistic attitude of ignoring the existence of two German states. The western powers have thereby recognised that it is impossible to discuss or decide questions affecting Germany without the participation of the German Democratic Republic.

4. Peace Treaty with Germany

"The Governments of the GDR and the USSR declare that they

(cont. on next page)

NON-AGGRESSION PACT

The German Democratic Republic has continued its efforts to get West Germany to conclude a non-aggression pact. The aim of this pact would be to lay down in a formal fashion the obligation for both German states to use only peaceful means in working for German reunification.

On June 19th the German Democratic Republic formally presented the West German Government with a draft of such a pact, and requested West Germany to make any counter-proposals which it might feel necessary.

The main terms of this draft non-aggression pact were as follows:

Article 1: The two German states "will refrain in their mutual relations from every threat of force or use of force".

Article 2: The two states "give the solemn undertaking to respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the other party and to strive solely by peaceful means for the reunification of Germany".

Article 3: The two states "will take all necessary steps to prevent demands for, preparations for, and commission of acts of force against the other party".

Article 4: If a third party undertakes an act of aggression against one German state, the other German state will give the aggressor no support, even where treaty obligations exist.

Article 5: The two states will settle all disagreements by means of negotiations.

Article 6: The non-aggression pact does not affect the membership of the two German states in military coalitions.

Article 7: "The present treaty shall remain in force until the formation of a united German state."

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The West German Government ignored this offer of a non-aggression agreement.

will continue to struggle for the conclusion of a peace treaty with Germany. Both Governments believe that the conclusion of a peace treaty with an All-German Government or some other body representing the whole of Germany would be the best solution. If the reactionary forces continue to obstruct practical measures for German reunification, then the peace treaty ending the present abnormal situation must be concluded with the two existing German states.

"If the aggressive forces prevent a peaceful solution on these lines too, then the peace treaty will be signed with the German Democratic Republic by those states which are interested in . . . maintaining peace and security in Europe. It is clear that the various decisions and rulings resulting from the capitulation and military defeat of Germany would then lose their validity.

5. The Berlin Question

"The Governments of the GDR and the USSR declare once again that they regard as untenable the situation which has arisen in West Berlin as a result of the retention of the occupation regime. West Berlin, which lies on the territory of the German Democratic Republic, has become a dangerous centre of conflict and a centre of subversive activity and hostile propaganda against the German Democratic Republic and other socialist countries. We decisively reject the attempts of the western powers to extend the occupation regime to the whole of Berlin instead of settling this question which has long been ripe for solution.

"We repeat our honest desire to find a solution of the West Berlin problem acceptable to all parties. We are convinced that under the present conditions the best solution would be to give West Berlin the status of a demilitarised free city, which would neither affect the rights of the West Berlin population nor their way of life, which differs from the social and economic system in the German Democratic Republic. The independent existence of the West Berlin Free City, its unhindered communications with the outside world, and non-intervention in its internal affairs from any side, would have to be guaranteed by the Big Four with the participation of the United Nations . . .

"In order to ease a solution of this problem, and to come nearer to the position of the western powers, we are ready to provide for a transitional period.

6. Soviet-German Cooperation

"Negotiations were conducted on a further broadening of economic and trade relations. It was agreed that in the course of this year a long-term trade agreement until 1965 should be concluded (between the GDR and the USSR).

"In the field of the chemical industry a number of measures have been taken to guarantee closer cooperation, which will make it possible to increase the supply of consumer goods for the people of both countries."

Heil!

"I have not abandoned hope of seeing the re-establishment of our former Reich."

Heinrich Luebke, Christian Democrat candidate for West German President, in a TV interview, June 24th.

Scandinavia Threatened

West German militarists already have plans to occupy the Scandinavian countries, as in the Second World War, Walter Ulbricht, Deputy Prime Minister of the German Democratic Republic, declared in Rostock on June 27th. Ulbricht was speaking at the opening of the "Baltic Week", a big rally of visitors from all countries bordering on the Baltic Sea.

The Deputy Prime Minister repeated previous suggestions that the countries bordering the Baltic should join in an atom-free zone. "In this connection I repeat once again that there are neither atomic weapons nor rocket weapons on the territory of the German Democratic Republic" Ulbricht said. "Twenty-six Danish journalists have just been able to see for themselves that charges to this effect made by West German propagandists are lies. We should be glad to let other journalists, and other persons interested, convince themselves by personal inspection."

Mr Herter, Meet Mr Lloyd

"If the Soviet Union persists in its determination to add more than 2,000,000 free West Berlins to the captive peoples of Eastern Europe, then no agreement is possible."

Christian Herter, US. Secretary of State, June 23rd

"The Soviet Government have also declared their willingness for the West Berlins to remain free to choose their way of life. To that extent both sides have had a declared common purpose in these discussions."

Selwyn Lloyd, British Foreign Minister, June 24th

Bonn Politicos Want W. Poland

Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and other prominent West Germans called on June 28th for the incorporation of large parts of West Poland in Germany. The call was made at a rally in Cologne of a quarter of a million Germans who formerly lived in Silesia, a territory which was incorporated in Poland at the end of the Second World War under the terms of the Potsdam Agreement. The population of Silesia is today almost 100 % Polish.

Chancellor Adenauer stated at the rally that normal relations with Poland could only be established when West German territorial claims had been satisfied.

Another speaker, Hinrich Kopf, Prime Minister of Lower Saxony, named as a war criminal on the official Polish war crimes list, stated that "German Silesia is eternal". Erich Schellhaus, Refugee Minister in Lower Saxony, stated that Poland should be forced to make restitution "for the crimes committed against Germans".

Prominent at the rally were marching columns of "Germanic Youth of the East", in black and grey uniforms. The West German newspaper "Die Welt" compared this organisation to the "Hitler Youth".

SS DOCTORS AT WORK

The letter below is reproduced from the „Manchester Guardian" on June 13th:

Sir,—It is now common knowledge that numerous ex-S.S. doctors who carried out inhuman experiments on inmates of Nazi concentration camps are back at work in successful practices throughout Germany. In all, it appears that about 120 concentration camp doctors are involved, nearly a quarter of these working in Western Germany, many under assumed names.

Their list of crimes is indeed appalling. For example, a Frau Dr Herta Oberheuser admitted killing helpless women prisoners by the injection of petrol into their veins; another doctor carried out similar experiments. Both of these were paid compensation by the State and given permission to practise in Germany once more. Others include a professor whose speciality included experiments on human beings using mustard gas, a doctor who was responsible for collecting gold teeth, another who was an expert on lethal injections, and a professor whose enlightened research was that of finding out how long it takes for human beings to die from cold and exposure. I understand that the last of these is a lecturer at an important German university.

There has been a fair amount of correspondence on this subject in the "British Medical Journal" and in it doctors from all parts of the country have expressed their disgust and horror at this denigration of the Hippocratic Code. As a result the British Medical Association protested strongly about Dr Herta Oberheuser last year, stating that her return to the treatment of patients was "an affront to the honour, morals, and high ideals of medical practice".

In October, 1958, I wrote to the West German Embassy and was informed that permission for Dr Oberheuser to continue medical practice had been withdrawn. Since then she has appealed and is now in practice near the Danish border.

It might be imagined that the German Medical Association would have removed the names of these individuals from their register immediately but they are quite clearly not inclined to do so. They argue that they could only consider this if action were taken against the doctors by the State, because they could not accept the validity of the Allied trials at Nuremberg and elsewhere.—Yours &c., Benjamin Portnoy

2 St John Street, Manchester 3.

Democratic Germany Improves Health Services

The health and social security service in Democratic Germany, already one of the best in the world, was further improved at the beginning of July, when far-reaching new regulations came into force. Here are some of the new improvements:

1. Hospitalisation: In future the national health service will pay full hospitalisation charges for insured persons and dependents for an unlimited period, instead of the normal six-month period hitherto in force.

2. Pensions for the Blind: There have been increases in special grants for the blind. Grants for special care in the most difficult cases have been doubled to reach a new total of 240 marks monthly (over £ 20). These grants are paid irrespective of whether the blind person is employed or not.

3. Miners' Pensions: The very generous special pensions for miners have been extended to cover new categories. In future almost all miners with a minimum of 15 years service in the pits will get the special pension, whether or not they are still employed in mining at the time of retirement.

4. Further improvements: Other items in the new regulations provided bigger special-care grants for badly disabled persons, and full disability pensions for young people without the previous "five years at work" clause.

New Big Ferry

The "Sassnitz", a new 7000 ton ferry ship, made its maiden voyage to Trelleborg, Sweden, on June 24th. The ship, which can carry 40 freight waggons, 30 cars and 888 passengers, was completed 100 days ahead of schedule by the workers of the Rostock shipyards in the German Democratic Republic.

A-Scientist in GDR

Dr Klaus Fuchs, noted nuclear scientist, arrived in East Berlin from Britain on June 23rd. He has become a citizen of the German Democratic Republic.

Dr Fuchs, who fled from Germany when Hitler came to power in 1933, played a notable part in the early years of nuclear research, and was chief of the theoretical physics branch of the British Atomic Research Establishment at Harwell. In March 1950 the Central Criminal Court in London sentenced him to 14 years imprisonment after he had pleaded guilty on four counts of giving to an unknown person for a purpose prejudicial to the interests of the State information relating to atomic research. He earned full remission.

Workers' Festival

The "First Workers' Festival", consisting of cultural events of almost all kinds, was held from June 13th to 21st in cities and villages of Halle County, a heavily industrialised chemical and coal-mining area.

More than 500,000 visitors, mostly workers, visited performances of amateur choral, dance and drama groups and also of professional theatres and symphony orchestras from Berlin and other cultural centres. Many thousands of West German visitors also watched the performances, which were presented in the clubhouses of the larger factories, in cinema theatres, on open-air stages and even on market squares.

In many cases groups of writers, actors and artists visited the factories and had long informal discussions with the workers during the day and then held open forums in the evening where questions were asked, criticisms aired and suggestions made for possible future books or works of art.

Performances of amateur drama groups from the factories were also visited by faculty members of the Leipzig Drama Institute. Some of the more talented amateur actors and actresses will be invited to take up studies at the Drama Institute.

Fascist Lit. Blacked

Printing workers in the West German province of Lower Saxony have decided to refuse work on all fascist or anti-Semitic literature. The Printing Workers' Union will give full support to any member sacked for applying the union decision.

From the Nazi Files:

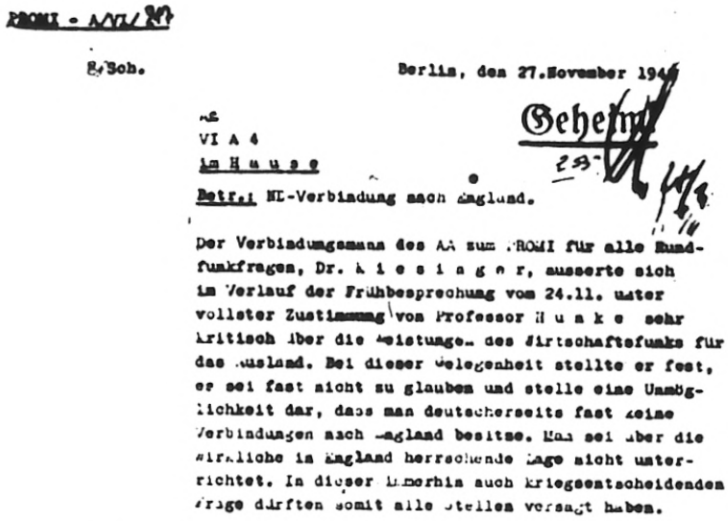
"Send Spies to England" Man Is Today W. German Province Premier

Secret files of Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry, just discovered in Berlin, show that a man who is now Prime Minister of one of the West German provinces, and a right-hand man of Adenauer, urged that more nazi spies should be sent to Britain in 1942.

The old nazi concerned is Dr Kurt Georg Kiesinger, today Prime Minister of Baden-Wuerttemberg, and until recently Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the West German Parliament.

During the Second World War Doctor Kiesinger was liaison officer between the Nazi Foreign Ministry and the Radio Section of the Propaganda Ministry. In this capacity he laid down the political line to be followed by British traitor "Lord Haw-Haw" (William Joyce, executed for treason in Britain in 1945).

On this page we reproduce the first paragraphs of a secret report found in the files of the Nazi Propaganda Ministry. The translation of this report reads as follows:



RADIO - A/VI/30

g/Boh. Berlin, den 27.November 194

Geheim

VI A 4

Im Hause

Betr.: NL-Verbindung nach England.

Der Verbindungsmann des AA zum RDI für alle Rundfunkfragen, Dr. K i e s i n g e r, äusserte sich im Verlauf der Frühbesprechung vom 24.11. unter vollster Zustimmung von Professor H u n k e sehr kritisch über die Leistungen des Wirtschaftsfunks für das Ausland. Bei dieser Gelegenheit stellte er fest, es sei fast nicht zu glauben und stelle eine Unmöglichkeit dar, dass man deutscherseits fast keine Verbindungen nach England besitze. Man sei über die wirkliche in England herrschende Lage nicht unterrichtet. In dieser Hinsicht auch kriegsentscheidenden Frage dürften somit alle Stellen versagt haben.

Berlin, November 27th 1942

SECRET

Subject: Intelligence Links with England.

Dr Kiesinger, liaison officer of the Foreign Ministry with the Propaganda Ministry responsible for all radio questions, was very critical at the morning conference on November 24th about the achievements of the economic transmissions for foreign countries; he received full backing from Professor Hunke. In this connection he said that it was almost unbelievable, and was a quite impossible situation, that on the German side there were practically no connections with Britain. One was not informed about the real situation in England. This was a question decisive for the war, but all branches concerned appeared to have failed. This situation was quite unbearable. There was plenty of traffic between Sweden and Britain. Apparently it had not been possible up to the present to utilise this situation for intelligence purposes, and thus to receive useful and correct information from England. One did not even know in Germany what food was served in English restaurants, how big the portions were, what you could get off-the-ration in restaurants, how the general supply situation was, etc. On the German side one was practically forced to invent reports on these subjects, basing oneself on the smallest speck of reality.

It must be possible to find suitable persons, preferably neutral citizens, who could be brought in touch with the English in Sweden, and who could perhaps then themselves fly to England.

He asked Professor Hunke for a longer talk on this subject in the near future. Professor Hunke and several officials of Department A. pointed out that it should be in the first place the job of the diplomatic mission to establish connections. The Foreign Ministry representative gave no reply to this . . .

At the end of the war Dr Kiesinger was interned by the Americans for some months as an active nazi. After his release from internment he became active in the Christian Democratic Union, Chancellor Adenauer's party, and was elected to the first West German Parliament in 1949. In 1955 he became Vice President of the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe.

Here are some post-war quotes from the mouth of Dr Kiesinger:

"Socialism has tendencies which could become dangerous to the state as we wish to see it."

(West German Parliament, April 11th 1951)

"There are great dangers ahead if some trade union leaders continue their efforts to intervene in foreign policy . . . In these great and complicated problems the mass of the people are not competent to reach a decision."

("Frankfurter Allgemeine", February 2nd 1955)

"A journey through Asia makes quite clear to one the great privilege of being a European. This has nothing to do with racial pride, it is simply a simple word of thanks to our Creator."

("Spiegel", December 5th 1956)

Anti-Semitism Gaining in West Germany

Anti-Semitism has won ground in West Germany in the past year, Dr van Dam, General Secretary of the Central Councils of Jews in Germany reported to the annual conference of the organisation in Dusseldorf.

"The anti-Semitic potential of the German Federal Republic has increased in the past year", Dr van Dam stated. "The state should take action against these breaches of the peace."

The Council passed a resolution expressing its uneasiness about the increase in anti-Semitism "which has undoubtedly been nourished by the return of former active nazis to key positions in the state". It is tragic that fourteen years after the end of the war the Jews in Germany should be forced to utter a warning of this kind, the resolution stated.

FROM BALTIC TO BLACK PUMP

By Allen Mann

It only takes about a year of living in Berlin, I have found, before one tends to look at everything outside the capital as "provincial". In terms of new developments in Democratic Germany this is more than unjust, however; though there are thousands of new apartment buildings going up in Berlin, for example, they tend to get swallowed up in the big city; one finds oneself asking, "Why don't things move even quicker?" If one travels around, one gets a much more dynamic picture of developments, as I found for myself recently.

Shipyards

Three weeks ago I visited the Baltic seacoast — and was able to get some balance in my "Berlin outlook". I saw Rostock (150,000 inhabitants) and its suburb Warnemuende, where two huge shipyards have been built up from almost nothing during the last nine years. It was an extremely impressive experience to see the gigantic steel structure of the slipway crane plant come into view, miles away, and then grow larger and larger as one approached Warnemuende, which had once been little more than a sleepy fishing village and bathing beach. The new deep-sea port of Rostock is also being built here; next year, when the first section of it is finished, ocean-going vessels will be able to load and unload directly and easily in the German Democratic Republic, thus saving the high costs involved in importing and exporting via the West German port of Hamburg.

New Town

But even more interesting to me than the long new jetty and the other features of the new port are the changes which have already taken place in Rostock for its inhabitants. On the outskirts of this heavily-bombed city a whole new town has been built up. Blocks and blocks of pretty little two and four family homes nestling in greenery give way to many more blocks of large apartment dwellings on shady streets, with handsome store-fronts and large spacious schools. Not far away is a large building housing the Neptune Swimming Pool, which is claimed to be the most modern in Europe, with underwater windows for training and filming purposes, moving lights to help in regulating the speed of swimmers in training and other refinements too numerous to mention. The pool is also open to the public, but on the sunny day I was there, the children of the neighbourhood preferred the adjacent outdoor pool.

Not far away from the Neptune Pool is the Baltic (Ostsee) Stadium, seating 30,000, which the people of Rostock built for themselves — with both financial contributions and frequent voluntary turns with the pick and shovel.

The third in the row of big, new structures is a solid-looking polyclinic, situated conveniently enough near the football stadium.

Downtown

In the downtown area of Rostock, not far from the waterfront, is the "Lange Strasse". Like most other things here still being completed, improved or lengthened, it is a long row of large apartment buildings flanking a wide street decorated with long, narrow lawns. Modern shops stretch along both sides of the street and culminate in a large department store. I was too tired by this time to visit more than the ground floor. It was tastefully decorated, with subdued lighting and pleasant-looking salesgirls and I jotted down that the other floors were quite probably just as nice. All the buildings on this street are of red brick, with little towers, gables and other roof-top decorations; the buildings represent an attempt to find a synthesis between modern architecture and the traditional, old Gothic style of the North German seaport towns. This latter style, without the modern elements, faces one at the end of the street in the form of a large old red-brick cathedral.

A few steps away are other remnants of the old Rostock — quaint little homes just ripe for photographers, but not fit for human habitation. I hope they can soon be turned into museums or done away with quietly to make room for more new buildings.

This contrast between old and new may be seen everywhere in Democratic Germany, often in the very haphazard manner caused by the gaps left by the war and the speed of new construction.

This impressed me once again on a second trip to the other end of the country — to the south, through the county of Cottbus.

From the windows of one of the speedy, comfortable Hungarian-built buses which now, at last, provide a happy alternative to the slower, more expensive trains, I saw villages which seemed quite unchanged by time, surrounded by their fields of grain, potatoes and other crops.

Power Plant

Then, quite suddenly, the construction site of the new Luebbenau Power Plant loomed into view. When completed, its 16 turbines will supply more electricity than any plant of its kind in Europe.

Several miles further, and we saw more big smokestacks in the distances. They belonged to Trattendorf, the first big power-plant project in the area which was built largely by young people in one of the first "youth projects". This whole area south of Berlin is seamed with fields of the soft, only partially petrified coal called lignite upon which the economy of the German Democratic Republic has been based. That is why power plants are being built here.

And now we reached "Schwarze Pumpe" — the "Black Pump" — probably the biggest project of all in the whole country. There will be open-cast mining of lignite here, the coal will be pressed into briquets for homes and industry, will be turned to coke for the metallurgical industry, some will go to the power plant and be turned to electricity; gas will also be produced and a whole series of chemical by-products will emerge from tar to paints, synthetic fibres, plastics and other consumer goods.

Black Pump

"Black Pump" stretches for miles among the barren pinewoods of the territory called Lower Lusatia (Nieder-Lausitz). Construction is still going on at full speed — as we passed, just about twilight, the smokestacks dominated the landscape without the need of illumination but the huge work halls beneath them were already long streaks of fluorescent light.

In all directions I could see little lights twinkling, showing where new roads, railheads and other installations were under construction.

After passing the inn after which this whole "Black Pump" project had been named, our bus again plunged into the now-dark pine-woods, only to emerge, after about fifteen minutes, into the suburbs of the town of Hoyerswerda. This once sleepy little small town now appeared almost as excitingly busy as the industrial site we had just left. On both sides of the road, and in all directions, we could see the big new apartment houses which are being erected to house the workers of the "Black Pump". Everything here — schools, cultural opportunities, shops and transportation to and from work — is being planned, not for profit, but for the greatest possible comfort of the workers.

I had now left the big projects behind me. Another three-quarters of an hour of countryside and my bus reached its destination. Here was a town which I had not seen for several years. I noticed that here, too, large, new apartment buildings were going up or were completed in the outskirts, though not on the same scale as in Hoyerswerda. The big surprise came for me, however, when we arrived at the market place. Not only has there been a great increase in traffic, but the center of town, once dark and uninviting, now sparkled with neon-lights. A long shopping centre now replaced what had long been a bombed-out rubble pile and even the cinema theatre, which had been referred to in the past as the "flea box", had been polished up and renovated.

In the little village which was my final destination there were also changes in the last few years. There was a new school, with big windows and pleasant decorations and surrounded by rose beds and by a little park with a pond. It had also just been expanded from eight to ten years of study and new homes for three teachers and their families had been built. Another addition had been the new football field.

In my rather hurried travels I had now seen many changes, some modest, some really grandiose. Haste had made most of the impressions fairly superficial, but it was clear that everywhere in the republic things were moving ahead, and that every new achievement made the next one easier. I would soon see the results of some of these advances, I knew, in Berlin — a wider assortment of goods, more and more price cuts, additional wage increases, new inventions and all the rest. All in all, the trips through the provinces had broadened my Berlin outlook.

Swedish M.P. Reports on Church Life

Details of church life in the German Democratic Republic were given by Dean Vertil Mogard, Social Democratic member of the Swedish parliament, in an interview with "Stockholms Tidningen" on June 22nd.

Dean Mogard, who spent ten days in the GDR during June, stated: "As a pastor I was naturally particularly interested in church affairs. In church circles here in Sweden there is much talk about the martyrdom of the Evangelical Church and its pastors in East Germany. It is certainly not easy to be a pastor in the East German Republic: the state is in principle atheist, and there is complete division of church and state. Religious instruction may not be given in the state schools. In this respect the situation is the same as in the USA.

"The difference is that the church communities in the USA are well-to-do, and have rich members who are able to contribute much to their churches; in East Germany the churches have to rely on the self-sacrifice of their members, and there are no rich people there.

"The churches, however, are being reconstructed, and the state gives help in this respect. In this year's budget 60 million marks (over £ 5 million) has been earmarked for this purpose. The wonderful old Hof Church in Dresden has been reassembled piece by piece; the old sculptures of the apostles on the columns have been reconstructed from the ruins at a cost of 30,000 marks each.

"I asked a member of the government whether it would be possible to use the church for religious purposes after its restoration by the state. He was astonished, and explained that such restored churches were of course returned to the congregations . . .

"In Sweden there have been allegations that the Luther Museum in Wittenberg was to be closed or secularised. We journeyed to Wittenberg to check on these reports, and found that the church with the graves of Luther and Melanchthon was tended better than ever. The museum is situated in the former Augustine Monastery, where Luther was once a monk and where he later lived with his wife. It is a very interesting museum, and we were conducted round it by an old church dignitary who conducts short training courses for pastors in a nearby building . . ."

Win a New Reader

Fill in the name and address of a friend, work-mate or acquaintance on the form below, and send it to

Democratic German Report
Friedrichstrasse 167/III
Berlin W 8, Germany

We shall be pleased to mail sample copies of the paper to him or her.

Name .....

Address .....

Suits from Paste-Pot

An East Berlin clothing factory is experimenting with suits the seams of which are "pasted" instead of being sewn in the traditional fashion. First tests are being made with collars and other non-strategic areas. Volunteers who have worn the suits report that they have sent them ten times to the cleaners without becoming unstuck.

You Ask: We Answer

WHAT ABOUT DIVORCE?

...I've been told that it is impossible to get a divorce in the so-called "socialist" countries. What is the situation in this respect in East Germany?

R. T., Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.A.

Divorce is a difficult problem in most countries; here in Democratic Germany there was a great deal of discussion on how to bring the old German marriage and divorce laws, which were very one-sided in favour of the man, up-to-date in terms of the principles of "equality of the sexes" which are guaranteed in the constitution. Finally in 1955 a new law governing marriage and divorce was passed.

Paragraph 8 reads as follows: "A divorce may only be permitted if there are serious reasons for it and if the court decides, after thorough investigation, that the marriage has lost its meaning for the married couple, for their children and for society. The court must investigate especially carefully whether the results of a divorce would mean unjustifiably severe difficulties for one of the partners and whether the divorce would damage the well-being of children still of minor age."

That means that there are no legally-determined grounds for divorce as in the United States (such as adultery, cruelty, "husband being a vagrant" (Missouri) or "joining religious order disbelieving in marriage" (Kentucky, New Hampshire) nor for "unchastity of wife prior to marriage" (Maryland). The judges, usually including at least one woman, investigate each case on its merits and weigh the relative harm or benefit resulting from a divorce.

What does this really mean? Is there assembly-line divorce "turnout" à la Reno, Nevada or is it almost impossible to break wedding bonds? After the turbulent post-war years, when a great number of war marriages broke up, the rate of divorces headed steadily downwards — the latest figures available show a rate of 1.32 per thousand of the population in 1956, as compared with about 2.3 in the U.S.A. The West German rate has always been lower than in the German Democratic Republic, by the way; this is simply because the Roman Catholic Church, which opposes divorce, is predominant in West Germany, whereas East Germany is mainly Protestant.

As for alimony — this is only paid when one of the divorcees is unable to support herself (or himself) alone. In such cases, the court decides how much must be paid on the basis of the needs of the divorced wife and the ability to pay of the divorced husband (or the other way around, if the man should require financial help from the woman). But both divorced parents are held equally responsible financially for the support and upbringing of the children.

Carry-overs from the war years and the ever-present human failings and mistakes mean that divorces are still not uncommon. But their number is decreasing, and the methods here cut down light-headed decisions and suffering in such cases to a minimum.

(For more "news" on divorce in Democratic Germany, turn to concluding paragraphs of "Berlin Notebook" on the next page of this issue.)

YOUNG "REFUGEES" IN TROUBLE

West German Paper on Problem

The "Offenbach Post" in West Germany published on June 16th the following article on the problems of young people who leave the German Democratic Republic for West Germany.

"Hardly a week goes by in which the Juvenile Court of Offenbach does not have to deal with young people who have come to us from the Soviet Occupation Zone (Democratic Germany, ed.) and have here become delinquents. These young people represent a problem which, according to the experts, has by no means been correctly handled in the past. The problem was discussed frankly at a meeting of the Offenbach County Juvenile Court. Herr Ullrich, a social worker, said: 'It would be better if these youngsters were sent back to their parents as soon as they come to the zonal border. Naturally, that should only be done with those who have not left their homes for political reasons. But it is only a very small number who come to us for such reasons. Most of them come because of a desire for adventure which makes the West seem tempting to them. They are then welcomed with open arms at the border. But they must soon live in camps or in the mass production atmosphere of the refugee homes. They then lose their footing completely.'

"The young people who leave their homes in Saxony, Thuringia or other parts of the Zone do not only hurt themselves when they decide on their uncertain futures. Their fathers and mothers repeat again and again: 'There was no reason at all why the boy left.' 'The parents write us heart-breaking letters, they are bitterly disappointed that their son who went to the West became a thief — they are unable to understand it', said Herr Ullrich.

"In many cases, therefore, the best solution would be if the the young 'refugees' returned to their parents voluntarily. The East Zone authorities usually made no difficulties of any kind in such cases, the social worker pointed out. Returning home in this way would also be the best solution for the young man whose case had been the starting-point for the discussion. 'I didn't feel satisfied at home anymore', was the reason he gave for his 'fleeing'. Now, however, he says: 'I am very disappointed. As for new experiences, I have already had all the bad experiences that are possible — I had imagined that everything here would be completely different.'

"He had imagined the same things which so many others had also dreamt of; they imagined that roast turkey with all the trimmings would be served up to them on a silver platter here with us. During the trial which decided the fate of the young man mentioned above — for the time being, he was sent to a juvenile jail — there was also some discussion about 'propaganda' which had led boys in the Zone to go to the West. Dr Schaeg, the court-appointed defence attorney in the case, expressed surprise that there should be such propaganda, indeed, he could hardly believe that the youngsters were met at the borders with such willingness, or, as he expressed it, that they 'are welcomed with exultation'..."

BERLIN NOTEBOOK

By John Peet

It is always dangerous to jump to conclusions on insufficient evidence. I had a case at home the other day, when my daughter, aged three, announced that when she went to the doctor she wanted to go to a lady doctor, because men doctors stick needles into you. It was quite a logical conclusion, because she had recently had polio shots from a male doctor, while visits to female doctors had been confined to chest thumping and listening with a stethoscope.

This was a typical case of final conclusions based on insufficient evidence. And this seems to me to be the only explanation of some remarks about East Berlin made by Mr Kingsley Martin, editor of the London "New Statesmen", in the issue of June 6th. I am sorry to have to have a go at Mr Kingsley Martin, for his paper is by and large on the side of human decency and progress, but the remarks he makes cannot go unchallenged. Here is what he said:

"Certainly, I could see little improvement in East Berlin since my last visit. It has the feeling of a half-dead city. The war is still in everyone's face. Women trudge about among the still black and oppressive ruins with heavily loaded bags, and tired, watchful faces; there is little public transport. Only Stalinallee, with its 5,000 smart flats for the privileged, can in any way compete with modern housing in West Berlin or of any western city ... It all still looks very much like the East End of London the day after a night of blitz.

"Until one gets near the edge of the zone, almost out of the Berlin sector, there is little that is green and there is nothing that is gay or beautiful ... You can buy nothing, even from a shop next door, without showing your pass. You argue, if you are an East Berliner, that you had better keep any grouses to yourself, because the woman who keeps the shop knows who you are and must reply if she is questioned."

Now this is nearly all so fantastic that I scarcely know how to answer it. I have tried reading it over in German to an assortment of East Berliners, and they all found it terribly funny. Several people suggested that it must have been written about 1948, when the atmosphere was something like that described, and others, I fear, just tapped their foreheads when I told them that it had been written this year by a reputable British journalist.

The truth of the matter is that about one square mile of central Berlin, the first part you come to when you leave West Berlin, is still rather a mess, with quite a lot of ruins. I can only assume that Kingsley Martin was given a tour round the ruins by some West Berliner who wanted to give him the worst possible impression of East Berlin. The phrases about „war in everyone's faces", "trudging through the ruins with heavily loaded bags" (loaded with what?) and "watchful faces" appear to have been lifted from Orwell.

And what can I say to "Only Stalinallee with its smart flats for the privileged"? If Mr Kingsley Martin had taken the trouble to ring a few door bells he would have discovered that the overwhelming majority of the residents of the Stalin Allee are factory workers: apart from that, this year alone more than 10,000 flats, smarter, simpler but more modern than those in Stalin Allee are going up in other parts of East Berlin. And I really would have expected a Socialist like Kingsley Martin to have noted that these flats are provided at rents which workers can pay, not at fantasy rents like those charged in West Berlin.

And then the phrase "little that is green, and nothing that is gay or beautiful". Next time I am in London, I shall ask Kingsley Martin to take a bus ride down Commercial Road with me, pointing out the greenery, the gaiety and beauty. As a matter of fact, for the east end of a European city, East Berlin has a rather large number of well-kept parks and open spaces, which are certainly gay enough on summer days.

Finally, let me deal with the statement "You can buy nothing without showing your pass". Kingsley Martin seems to imply that this is some sort of system for checking up on grousers. If it were, it would be the most inefficient system in the world, because every time I go shopping I hear grouses of all sorts, and none of the grousers seem to get shipped to the saltmines: at least they are in the shop again next day, grousing merrily away.

In fact the showing of passes, which is maddeningly inconvenient, is a result of the odd situation of Berlin as a split city. In West Berlin you can buy East German marks at a cut rate, and if West Berliners were allowed to purchase freely in East Berlin shops they would quickly buy the place up. The showing of identity cards when you buy things is intended to prevent this.

I am writing all this more in sorrow than in anger, for I am sure that Kingsley Martin himself does not want to write a lot of guff. I would earnestly beg him, the next time he comes to Berlin, to come past and see me. I promise to drop whatever I am doing and go out with him to look for those tired watchful faces, the lack of new houses, and the absence of greens and gaiety.

P.S. Journalists from the socialist countries sometimes do just as badly when they report from Britain or America. Just for the record I should like to note that the correspondent of one East Berlin paper, after a walk round the back streets of Cardiff last year, recorded solemnly that things had not changed since Friedrich Engels wrote the "Condition of the Working Class in Britain" in 1844.

* * *

But let us turn now to the ineffable Mr Terence Prittie, Bonn correspondent of the once-good "Manchester Guardian". On June 10th Mr Prittie reported in his paper that East Germany had become a "paradise for divorce". This statement is a bit debatable, and might even make Democratic Germany desirable to some harried husbands, but that is not what I want to argue about. The article states: "Another easy formula for political divorce is 'interfering with the political and economic progress of the People's Democratic State'. This can cover a multitude of sins, from failing to put a husband's carpet slippers out for him to arguing with him over the logic of contributing his savings to party funds."

This is Mr Prittie at his wild and woolly best. Let us take the second case first: this is just silly since the "party" — I presume he means the Socialist Unity Party — does not solicit contributions, and I have certainly never heard of anyone giving his savings to its funds. But the carpet slipper divorce is a honey. It is not only silly: it is memorable. If Mr Prittie would give me the details of where and when this carpet slipper divorce was obtained, I shall gladly provide him with the most expensive pair of carpet slippers I can find, for his wife, if any, to lay out for him. And I shall publish full details of the case on this page.

Over to you, Mr Prittie.

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